

A FREE-HAND TALK ABOUT THE STAGE AND STAGE FOLK

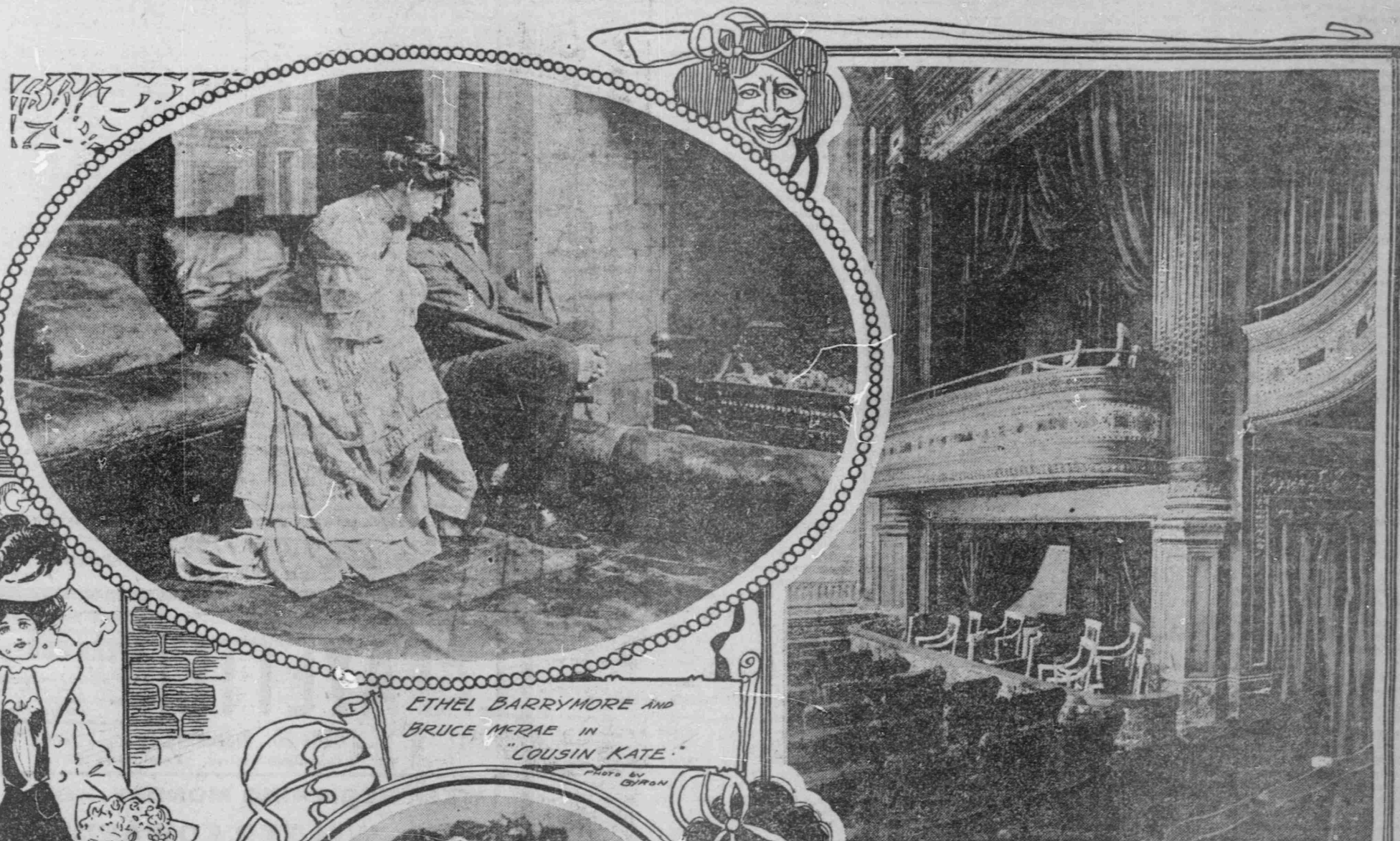
Ethel Barrymore's Success in "Cousin Kate"

Sir Charles Wyndham's Nephew Leading Man

New Hudson Theater and Its Young Manager

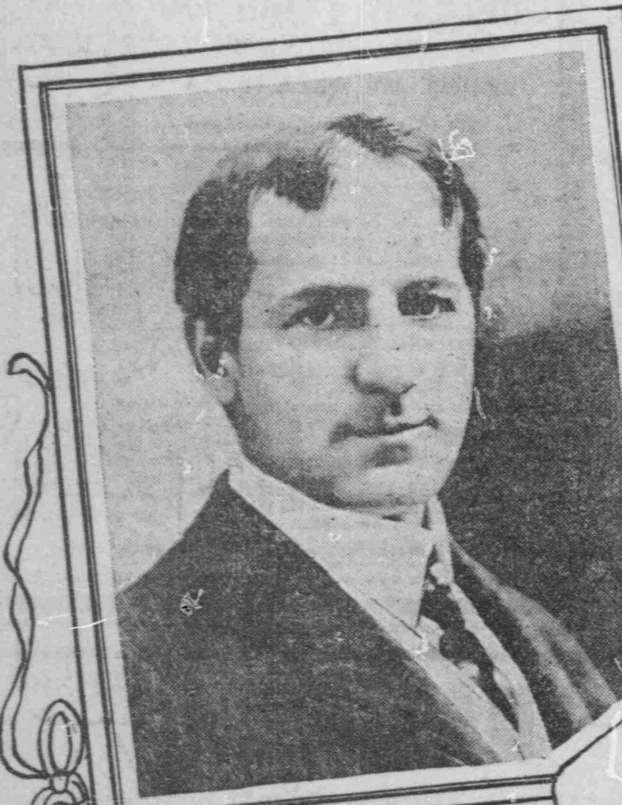
Wilson's Revival of the Perennial "Erminie"

Jessie Bartlett Davis Again Leading Woman



ETHEL BARRYMORE AND
BRUCE MCKEE IN
"COUSIN KATE"

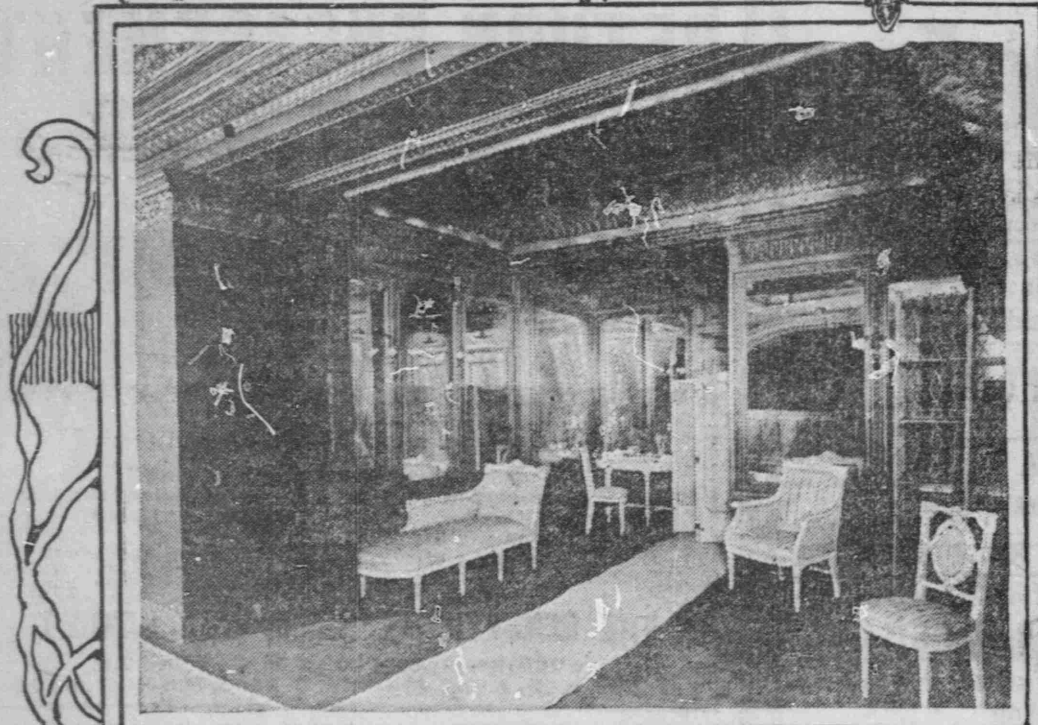
HENRY B. HARRIS' HUDSON THEATRE
SHOWING BOXES WITH TIFFANY
GLASS MOSAICS



FRANCIS WILSON
STARRING AGAIN IN "ERMINIE"



MARGUERITE
SYLVA
APPEARING IN THE
TITLE ROLE OF
"ERMINIE"



LADIES' RECEPTION ROOM IN THE HUDSON THEATRE
MODELED AFTER LOUIS XVI. BOUDOIR

By MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

NEW YORK, Oct. 31.—When I heard that Ethel Barrymore was to appear in "Cousin Kate" it seemed almost unbelievable. I had seen the play in England, and knew that the part of the heroine was that of a woman no longer young. Indeed, as portrayed by Ellis Jeffreys at the London Haymarket, one might imagine her to be somewhere in the thirties.

"Which is going to be sacrificed," I asked myself, "Miss Barrymore's youth (with the aid of the make-up box) or the realism of the story?"

Now that I have attended a performance of the piece at the Hudson, I find that neither has suffered. Miss Barrymore is as young and charming in appearance as ever, and although she blithely tells you that she is twenty-nine, the obvious discrepancy between this statement and the facts on the face of her do not even jar the probabilities of the little play, which I heard a woman on the way out declare to be "dear."

It is certainly very slight, and very short, and to my mind not quite as entertaining as Mr. Davies' other piece—also still running in London—"Mrs. Goring's Necklaces," but it is dainty, wholesome, and thoroughly well acted by everybody except the small boy, and I am not in the least surprised that it has duplicated the London hit.

Ethel Barrymore's Rise.

Sometimes I find it difficult to realize that Ethel Barrymore is the same girl whose harsh voice and awkward movements used to get on my nerves when she was in her Uncle John's troupe, with which she made her first appearance in 1886, taking Elsie de Wolfe's place in "The Bauble Shop." She was then only sixteen, and the next year made a small hit as the maid servant, Priscilla, in "Rosemary."

Soon after that she went to England, where she played in Henry Irving's company, leaving it to come back with Annie Russell in "Catherine." This play was a source of much chagrin to both Miss Russell and Miss Barrymore. Mrs.

Le Moyne overshadowed the former, and the critics found all manner of fault with Miss Barrymore's voice. Both ladies declared their intention of going back to England, where it seemed to them they were more appreciated than in their own country.

It was about this time that the air was thick with rumors about Ethel Barrymore's engagement to Englishmen. First it was to Gerald Du Maurier, son of "Tribby's" author; then to Laurence Irving, son of Sir Henry.

Regarding this latter episode, I find in my files a clipping to the effect that when her poor father, Maurice—now, alas! laid aside—learned of the affair he cabled her: "Have just heard of your engagement. Heartiest congratulations." When two weeks later news came that the prospective alliance was not to be, he sent another wire under the ocean: "Have just heard that your engagement is off. Still congratulate you."

Her First Appearance.

It was in February, 1900, that Ethel Barrymore first showed New Yorkers the germs of the ability she inherits from her lamented mother, John Drew's sister, Georgia. She had been playing on the road the part of the Countess Stella de Gex, in "His Excellency, the Governor," a role that had been done at the Lyceum by Jessie Millward. Mr. Frohman gave a special matinee of the piece at the Garrick to show how Miss Barrymore had improved, thus laying the foundation for her appearance there the next winter as a star in "Captain Jinks."

This Clyde Fitch comedy, when originally brought out in Philadelphia, was practically a failure, but New York took to it at once, and gave it a run almost up into the two hundreds. The play lasted Miss Barrymore two seasons, and last winter she scored again with "A Country Mouse," besides displaying her versatility by donning a boy's costume in the pathetic curtain raiser, "Carrots."

Clever Bruce McKee.

She has retained her clever leading man, Bruce McKee, a nephew of Sir Charles Wyndham and Mrs. Bronson Howard. He is an Englishman, but

made his first stage appearance in New York.

This was in 1891, and some of the plays in which he figured were "The Merchant of Venice," "The Fatal Card," "Shenandoah," and "The Fatal Card." After that he went with Olga Nethercole, and after two seasons with Kelsey and Shannon, joined William Gillette's company to create Dr. Watson in "Sherlock Holmes."

Three years ago he played another long season in New York as Charles Brandon, leading man with Julia Marlowe, in "When Knighthood Was in Flower." In this romantic piece Mr. McKee was able to make use of his fencing abilities, which he possesses in no mean degree, the exploiting of which has been denied him in "A Country Mouse" and "Cousin Kate."

Mrs. Whiffen is an adorable mother and housewife, who is afraid the fowl won't go round when she hears that the curate has been invited to tea. For nine seasons Mrs. Whiffen was a valued member of the stock company at the old Lyceum, in Fourth Avenue, and of late she has been with the Charles Wyndham company at the Empire.

When Arthur Byron opens in "Major Andre" at the Savoy, she will be transferred to that cast, leaving Maude Adams' mother, Annie Adams, to follow her in "Cousin Kate."

Mrs. Whiffen's late husband, Tom Whiffen, was the original New York Admiral in "Pinafore," in which she herself sang "Little Buttercup." Her maiden name was Blanche Galton. The Whiffens came from England more than twenty years ago, and adopted America as their home. Mrs. Whiffen's son Tom is also an actor, and last summer played the role of the Chinaman in the Stewart company's production of "The Geisha" at the Grand Opera House.

Grant Stewart as the Curate.

When Grant Stewart first stepped on the Hudson's stage as the curate who stirs up most of the trouble, I feared he was going to appear too manly for the part. The fellow I saw in London looked the character from the very outset. But Mr. Stewart got away with the role's requirements in first-rate shape. He is another recruit from Dan Froh-

man's stock forces, although most of his time with them was put in while they tarried at Daly's. He was a clergyman of quite another stripe, the vicar in fact, in "Lady Huntworth's Experiment." This was in December, 1899, and Jim previous to that he appeared as a droll member of parliament in "The Man of Forty." In "Frocks and Frills" two seasons ago, he enacted an impecunious peer.

Beatrice Agnew, who plays the conscientious Amy, was in Miss Barrymore's company last season, as the maid servant Annette, in the curtain raiser, "Carrots." The maid Jane in "Cousin Kate"—Anita Rothe—recall as the quarrelsome German ballet dancer in "Captain Jinks."

The Hudson's Charms.

I notice that the new house prettily named the Hudson, is being advertised about the streets as the women's theater. It assuredly deserves the honor of being regarded in this light, if the term carried with it the idea of comfort and good taste. Severely plain as to exterior, one has but to step into the commodious lobby to "catch" an atmosphere of refinement that should soon make this house the favorite with that class whom Mrs. Osborne tried in vain to decoy into her handbox last winter.

The mirrors in the lobby alone will win over the ladies. For they abound on both sides, so that there is no need to appear to unsuitable man with that important over play question "Is my hat on straight?"

The Tiffany decorations in the interior proper are in just the right tones to be restful to the eyes, without being subdued to the point of somberness; the drop curtain is the handiest in the city and the concealed lighting effects a complete success.

The manager of the new theater, Henry B. Harris, is one of the youngest in the business. Indeed, he is the youngest, if I mistake not, so far as the director of house are concerned. He is the son of William Harris, of the firm of Rich & Harris, producers of "Vivian's Pappas" and "Drink," and was business manager for Amelia Bingham when she brought out "The Climbers."

Manager Harris' Career.

His first essay on his own account was the production of "The Last Appeal," a serious play by Leo Dietrichstein. That this failed did not deter the young manager from going ahead, and the next winter he launched Robert Edeson as a star, scoring a mighty hit in "Soldiers of Fortune." He made another ten strike last autumn with Alice Fisher in "Mrs. Jack."

Mr. Edeson, I may add, will be at the Hudson in January, with a new Richard Harding Davis play, "Ran-son's Folly," and the end is the same month will see Miss Fisher at the Bijou in "What's the Matter With Susan?"

There are few things so pathetic in the players' world as the persistence with which some actors cling to bygone successes. Yes, there is one thing more saddening still—and, as it happens, both are now on view in New York.

At the Casino Francis Wilson is appearing in his third revival of "Erminie," and has learned to be no less vul-

gar in his fun-making than he was of yore. And say what you will, perennial as this opera threatened to become, it does stale, as the works of Gilbert and Sullivan never do. There is an enormous amount of talk to no purpose in the opening portion.

And yet "Erminie" may still be counted on to draw more surely than an untied piece, something which may turn out a fortune or a frost—it is always a toss up which till after the first performance, with most of the odds in favor of the frost.

Mr. Wilson will be just fifty years old on the 7th of next February. He was born in Philadelphia, and made his first hit as a clog dancer. With his partner, James Mackin, he used to appear with the Birch, Wambold & Backus San Francisco Minstrels which lived forth so long on Broadway in the theater now known as the Princess.

Mr. Wilson was not seen in New York at all last season, being on tour with "The Toreador," which lasted him two years. Previous to that he played an all-summer's engagement in "The Strollers." William Broderick, with him row as the other thief, Ravensness, was the bull fighter, Carajola, in "The Toreador."

Madge Lessing as Javotte.

It seemed odd to me to see Madge Lessing in Lulu Glaser's old part—taken by her in the last two revivals—Javotte. I saw Miss Lessing in London not three months ago as Little Emily in a dramatization of "David Copperfield" that failed to score at the Adelphi. She was leading woman for Wilson about four years ago in "The Monks of Malabar."

Miss Lessing is an English girl, born in London, but came to this country some sixteen years ago, and appeared first in the chorus at Koster & Bial's, but she was quickly promoted to leading roles. Her first appearance at the Casino was made in "The Passing Show," and she attracted considerable notice then in "Jack and the Beanstalk." Three years ago she was lured back to London to play the title role in the Drury Lane pantomime, "The Sleeping Beauty and the Beast."

vis dons tights again—as in her Alan-a-Dale days in "Robin Hood"—and swags about as the dashing Captain De-launay. Her teeth are as glittering white as ever, and she is admittedly a handsome woman, but alas! her voice is but the shadow of its former self, and one keeps asking one's self, "Oh, why, oh, why, does she do it?"

Surely there is no money need for her to continue. Her husband, Will Davis, is one of the leading theater managers of Chicago, so it is purely a case of a passion for the stage. Of late years Mrs. Davis has been singing in vaudeville.

She was born about sixty miles west of Chicago, and her father possessed a fine bass voice. There was an older sister (who afterward died) with a splendid soprano, and to eke out the household finances, which were of the slenderest, the father was accustomed to give concerts in the neighborhood with strictly family talent.

In this way people of influence came to learn of Jessie's magnificent contralto, and in due course a position in a Chicago church choir was obtained for her. And thus it came about that she was selected for Little Buttercup in a church choir "Pinafore" troupe. At the end of the engagement she married her manager, Mr. Davis.

Sang With Patti.

Her first appearance in New York was made at the Academy of Music, with Adelina Patti, in "Faust." Mrs. Davis sang "Siebel" and was frightened half to death at the idea of appearing on the same stage with the famous diva.

Gen. Lee Honors "Polly."

Presents Adelaide Thurston With a Jeweled Badge in Richmond.

Adelaide Thurston had a most happy surprise in Richmond when she presented "Polly Primrose" there. In the crowded house was a large representation of Daughters of the Confederacy, who last year made the pretty little actress a member of their organization. After the third act, in the midst of the curtain calls, Gen. Fitzhugh Lee stepped upon the stage and in a gallant speech presented Miss Thurston with a jeweled badge on behalf of the Daughters. The "Times-Dispatch" said:

"Pretty Miss Thurston, looking for all the world like a sweet girl graduate returning with her diploma on commencement day, stood before the general and with most becoming blushes heard his tribute to fair women, and then, in a most ingenuous manner, expressed her appreciation of the honor that had been conferred. 'Polly Primrose' is a picture without any dark clouds of war looming up in the background to cast a shadow over the bright colors. There is not a line nor a scene to which either Southerner or Northerner could object. It is a love story, and wherever it may be played it will demonstrate that 'all the world loves a lover' and that 'all is fair in love and war.'"

"In its production not a detail is lacking to make it perfect. The ladies' costumes seem to have been resurrected from some grandmother's trunk, with the same regard for the period is shown in the male attire. Every piece of furniture, every picture hanging on the walls, is in keeping with the scene, and there is nothing to destroy the illusion that the spectator is in Primrose mansion, Georgetown, and that General Lee's army is on the other side of the Potomac."

In Charlottesville, two days later, the students of the historic University of Virginia, to the number of several hundred, attended "Polly Primrose," sent Miss Thurston their college flag with a great bouquet of roses, and later took the horses out of her carriage and drew her through the streets in triumph. Two of the characters in "Polly Primrose" are on the program as University of Virginia graduates.

Colonel Mapleson wanted her to go abroad and study for grand opera, but her preference was for lighter music. It is, perhaps, needless to remind my readers that she and Camille D'Arville were the leading women in the original production of "Robin Hood" in New York, which took place at the Garden Theater soon after the opening of that house.

I shall be interested in watching the outcome of Charles Frohman's experiment with his French company in the theater where Mrs. Osborne struggled and failed. Mme. Wiehe is a most accomplished artist, and one doesn't have to know very much French to appreciate her performance, either. Besides, the erstwhile Berkeley Lyceum isn't a big house to fill, even if the Four Hundred's dressmaker did find it a task beyond hope of her accomplishment.

Willie Collier at the Bijou.

Willie Collier ought not to have much trouble in keeping the Bijou tenanted with "A Fool and His Money" for the bill. Of course, it must be a severe blow to any pride he has in his own judgment to realize that he made a terrible mistake in turning this play down in the first place.

After hearing that he would have none of "Checkers" because it gave such a good chance to "Push" Miller, I can readily believe that his objections to his present piece were founded on the prominence accorded to the French artist, played last spring in Mr. Finney's company by Arnold Daly, and done excellently again in this revival by George Henry Trader, from the late Murray Hill stock.

Mansfield's "Old Heidelberg."

Hundreds in the Cast and Scenery by Carloads.

When Richard Mansfield travels this year he will have a more extensive entourage than even with "Julius Caesar" or with "Cyrano de Bergerac." The reason of this is that in addition to the long cast of principal artists there are in "Old Heidelberg" seventy-five young men who sing the college songs and old German "studentlieder." Mr. Mansfield will carry on tour everyone now with him in New York, which will mean a traveling list of nearly one hundred and twenty-five. His working staff will be unusually large, too, for the scenery of "Old Heidelberg" is curiously intricate and massive, and there is an abundance of special furnishings and furniture for every act, besides three horses and a kennel of dogs for the student scenes.

From New York Mr. Mansfield goes to Pittsburgh, then to Chicago. On his way to Boston for the holidays he plays in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany to break the long jump. He remains in Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Baltimore and Washington until March. Then he plays Richmond, Norfolk, Atlanta, and three other cities to reach New Orleans, and he is to be seen thereafter six times in Texas and in Memphis, Nashville and Louisville on his northern again. After April engagements in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and St. Louis he takes "Old Heidelberg" to Kansas City, Denver, and Salt Lake for two nights each to break the run into San Francisco, which city will see Mansfield in May for the first time in nine years.

He will thereafter hurry eastward over the northern route, stopping a night or two in Portland, Tacoma, Seattle, Spokane, Butte and Duluth only. The Mansfield organization will travel over the entire continent by special train of nine cars, though it is possible that he may decide to take his company through the Great Lakes from Duluth to Buffalo at the close of the season, and re-embark on the train at the latter city. None but the great centers will see Mansfield's "Old Heidelberg," for the show does not appear in New England outside of Boston, not at all in Canada, and not in Milwaukee, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Detroit, or any of the middle-sized cities of the North or West.